

Kurdish. If report speaks truly their
fierce tribal
feuds and readiness with the dagger are
Kurdish also.
Their country is the country of the hunted.
Its moun-
tains rise nearly perpendicularly to
altitudes of over
12,000 feet, and the valleys, such as Tyari,
Tkhoma, Baz,
Diz, and Jelu, are mere slits or gashes,
through which
furious tributaries of the greater Zab take
their impetuous
course. Above these streams the tribes
have built up
minute fields by raising the lower sides on
stone walls a
few feet above the rivers, the upper being
the steep hill
slope. So small are these plots that it is
said that the
harvest of some of them would only fill a
man's cap!
Occasionally heavy floods sweep away the rice
and millet
cultivation of a whole district, and the
mountaineers are
compelled to depend for their food entirely on
the produce
of their flocks.

If they could sustain themselves and their
animals
altogether within their own fastnesses, they
would be
secure from molestation either from Kurds or
Turks, for
the only possible entrances to their valleys
are so narrow
and ruggedly steep as scarcely to be
accessible for a pack-
horse, and ten men could keep any number at
bay. But
unfortunately the scanty herbage of their
mountains is
soon exhausted, and they have to feed their
flocks outside
their natural fortifications, where the sheep
are constantly
being carried off by the Kurds, who murder
the shepherds
and women. The mountaineers are quick to
revenge them-

selves ; they carry off Kurdish sheep, and
savage warfare
and a life under arms are the normal
condition of the
Ashirets. The worst of it is, that they are
disunited among
themselves, and fight and spoil each other
as much as
they fight the Kurds, even at times taking
part with
them against their Christian brethren.
Travellers are
scarcely safer from robbery among them than
among the
Kurds, but fierce, savage, and quarrelsome
as they are,